



The President's Daily Brief

23 May 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

23 May 1972

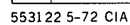
PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The military situation in South Vietnam is discussed on *Page 1*.

The threat of a breakdown in civil order in Chile was averted last weekend when President Allende's Socialist Party withdrew its support from left-wing extremists. (*Page 3*)

Chinese irregular forces are again buying and transporting opium in the Burma-Thailand border area. (*Page 4*)

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VIETNAM

The North Vietnamese continued strong probes against government lines along the Quang Tri - Thua Thien Province border yesterday for the second day. Most of the North Vietnamese forces have been pushed back, but only after sharp fighting.

The attacks do not appear to be an enemy attempt to make a major breakthrough toward Hue, but rather an effort to keep the South Vietnamese off balance. Intercepts last week indicated that the North Vietnamese were concerned that government forces were planning to carry out further raids in Quang Tri Province.

The North Vietnamese may be awaiting the arrival of the 325th Division before mounting a major new drive against the defenses of Hue. Communications continue to indicate that the 325th is moving into South Vietnam from the southern panhandle of North Vietnam. One regiment of the division is already south of the DMZ, and another regiment and the division headquarters also appear to be getting ready to move.

Kontum City was quiet on 22 May following the enemy's reconnaissance in force on the previous day. To the south, on Route 14, initial reporting indicates the Communists have overrun Fire Support Base 41, midway between Kontum and Pleiku. South Vietnamese rangers have been trying to reopen Route 14. Two ranger battalions have been airlifted close to an enemy-held position that commands the route, and a third unit is moving up the road about four miles away.

Debriefings of enemy prisoners and ralliers in Military Region 2 suggest that the Communists have lost as many as 2,000 troops in the fighting around Kontum in the last two months, chiefly from B-52 strikes and artillery fire. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Communists have experienced heavy losses of equipment and supplies, especially among armored units. They also appear to be having difficulty coordinating their support units for the campaign against Kontum City.

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(continued)

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Farther south, Communist shelling of An Loc continues. Intercepts indicate that elements of two North Vietnamese divisions and a senior rear services authority have moved back across the border to base areas in Cambodia, presumably for rest and refitting. Other enemy units have only recently been committed to the fighting around An Loc, however, and are expected to maintain pressure on the South Vietnamese forces in the area.

* * *

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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CHILE

The threat of a breakdown in civil order last weekend [redacted]

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[redacted] was averted when President Allende's Socialist Party withdrew its support from the extremist Movement of the Revolutionary Left. The Socialists took this unprecedented action under pressure from the Communists, and then joined the Communists in criticizing the violent aspects of the MIR. [redacted]

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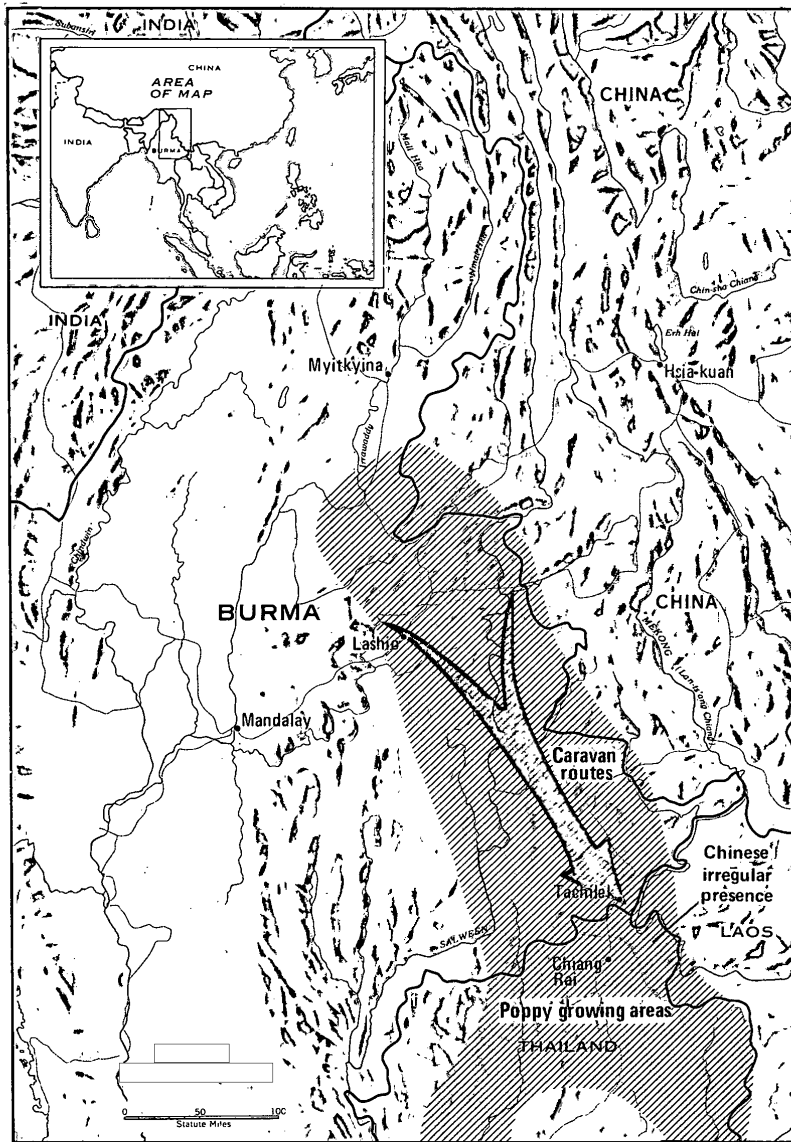
The Socialists' denunciation of the MIR may make Allende more willing to move against armed extremist groups of both left and right. Until now he has felt inhibited in disarming the leftists because they largely support the government's declared aims. [redacted]

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[redacted] Allende may still agree to disarm extremists if he believes this would reduce the threat from both the right and the MIR.

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THAILAND

[redacted] in the Burma-Thailand border area [redacted] Chinese irregular forces again are buying opium in the Lashio area of Burma and transporting it to refineries controlled by the irregulars in northern Thailand. The trade is [redacted] managed by the same Chinese leaders who agreed last summer to get out of the narcotics business in return for Bangkok's assistance in resettling 4,000 irregular troops and dependents. Bangkok subsequently purchased their stock on hand and in March publicized the burning of 26 tons of opium.

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The lucrative opium trade has been the irregulars' main source of income in the 20 years since they left China after the Communist takeover. They presumably calculate that they can afford to renege on last year's agreement because Bangkok would have great difficulty in deploying and supporting enough troops to close the long, remote border. They also are aware that the government values their cooperation against Communist insurgents in northern Thailand.

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NOTE

Turkey: President Sunay, no doubt speaking for Turkey's military leaders, yesterday approved the cabinet proposed by Prime Minister - designate Melen. The next step is for parliament to approve the new government's program, and this appears likely to happen within seven days. Most of the 25 cabinet members are holdovers.

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